SUBCOMMITTEES

Six SJRMP subcommittees have been formed to focus on the six problem areas identified in the legislation. Subcommittee participants serve on a volunteer basis, and, consequently, some are able to put forward a greater effort than others. The subcommittees are in the process of defining and establishing a series of priority actions with specified time frames, estimated costs and benefits, and proposed funding sources.

Work by the subcommittees has been extensive. A few examples of subcommittee work are described below.

Flood Protection Subcommittee

The flood protection subcommittee has had participation from federal and State agencies, local governments, levee and flood control districts, irrigation districts, private consulting firms, and environmental groups. In addition to regular monthly meetings, the subcommittee has been actively interacting and participating with other subcommittees.

The subcommittee has made substantial progress in identifying means by which peak floodflows can be reduced without any substantial new facilities or reduction in the conservation yield of existing facilities. It has also developed a proposal for partial control of the ongoing aggradation of the mainstem river channel. This aggradation is significantly reducing the channel's flow capacity.

Prior to formation of the subcommittee, the San Joaquin River Flood Control Association had proposed and discussed with the Corps a change in methodology for the reservoir release schedule at Friant Dam. This change was expected to permit a substantial reduction in peak downstream releases during rain floods and was to be further enhanced by real-time monitoring and analysis of upstream flows and power reservoir storage for improved flow release response time. The proposal had not been pursued. After further review by subcommittee members and discussion with Corps representatives, the Advisory Council requested that the Corps pursue the proposal, and the Corps has begun to do so. The Council has also requested, and the Corps has agreed to, examination of the applicability of a similar revision at other San Joaquin River dams.

Channel surveys show that substantial aggradation has occurred in the San Joaquin River channel along the San Joaquin Valley floor in recent decades. The subcommittee developed a proposal for partial control of the aggradation by the sale of accumulating sediments to commercial sand and gravel operators. The Advisory Council has endorsed the concept and designated The Reclamation Board and the Department of Water Resources as the facilitating agencies to develop a detailed proposal. If the detailed proposal is approved by the Council, the Council will recommend that the proposal be implemented. The proposal is expected to be self-financing but will involve some up-front costs.

The subcommittee is also reviewing and developing other measures, such as:

- The potential for flood control as a compatible benefit from Madera Irrigation District's proposed Fine Gold Water Conservation Project.

- A recommendation that the Corps' San Joaquin mainstem study address the difference between the design flow capacity of each river reach at design stage versus the actual flow capacity at that stage and the causes for the difference.

- An evaluation of the contribution of flows from uncontrolled streams to the San Joaquin River mainstem flow during rain floods.

In conjunction with other subcommittees, the flood protection subcommittee is supporting the need for real-time monitoring and analysis in the river system; examining the need for erosion control and the need to control encroachment by bamboo; considering the potential for overflow of floodwaters into low-lying undeveloped areas; addressing the need to see that San Joaquin River parkway plans provide for erosion control, channel clearance, and channel maintenance; addressing the need for upgrading levees that have inadequate structural design; and considering the potential flood benefit from conjunctive use projects.

Water Quality Subcommittee

The water quality subcommittee has been meeting monthly since November 1990. In addition to meeting independently, the subcommittee has held joint meetings with the water supply and wildlife subcommittees to explore opportunities to solve problems jointly. Representatives from federal, State, and local agencies have attended regularly, and citizen groups have attended when they were able.

The subcommittee has prepared and delivered to the Action Team a proposal for real-time monitoring of flows and salinities on the lower San Joaquin River system. The objectives of the monitoring system are to better coordinate drainage discharges and releases of high-quality water. The subcommittee has identified existing monitoring stations and those stations which the State Water Resources Control Board and other water users would be interested in seeing incorporated into a real-time network for water resources management. The subcommittee has also considered appropriate funding sources, both for establishment and operation and maintenance of those stations, and parameters to be measured.

Subcommittee members have prepared a concept paper to help participants think through the features of a monitoring system. This paper will assist SJRMP in determining whether the proposal is having the desired effects on the uses the subcommittee is attempting to protect or restore.

The subcommittee has discussed the issue of a master drain to remove salts from the San Joaquin Valley. The subcommittee agreed to seek consensus-based approaches to

reduce existing water-quality-related problems and to focus first on measures which would help solve problems for all water users in the near future.

The subcommittee has discussed potential application of a GIS to identify opportunities for solutions to complex problems. In discussing the utility of a GIS, the subcommittee felt that the desired products of the GIS system should be explicitly identified so that no excess information is digitized.

The subcommittee will be addressing the following management strategies:

- Fine-tuning east side releases for blending with discharges of high-quality water for other beneficial uses.
- Releasing saline discharges during periods of high dilution capability.
- Pumping out to the river good- or bad-quality stored ground water during periods of low- or high-dilution capability.
- Designing a GIS to map opportunities for management and preparing a proposal for action.
- Weighing opportunities for new reservoir storage and water quality releases.

Water Supply Subcommittee

During the past year, the water supply subcommittee has held seven meetings, including the initial organizational meeting and several joint meetings with other subcommittees. Members of this subcommittee represent federal and State agencies, irrigation districts, and water districts.

The subcommittee has focused on expanding the list of potential problems regarding water supply and how it relates to the concerns of most of the other subcommittees. Several preliminary ideas were discussed that will require further evaluation and coordination, particularly with the fisheries, water quality, and wildlife subcommittees.

In a joint meeting with representatives from the fisheries subcommittee, a preliminary figure of approximately 300,000 acre-feet of additional flows for the salmon fishery in the San Joaquin River system was indicated as an initial goal to work toward. An incremental approach needs to be considered that would be staged over the next ten to twenty years, with the amount of increased supply dependent on the particular option or facility being evaluated.

The importance of coordinated water management on the Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced Rivers has been discussed. Representatives from the Department of Fish and Game indicated the desirability for increased short-duration flows to move juvenile salmon downstream during the months of April, May, and June. Construction of additional

Game indicated the desirability for increased short-duration flows to move juvenile salmon downstream during the months of April, May, and June. Construction of additional storage facilities needs to be explored and examined due to the potential for increasing water supplies and providing improved coordinated operation for fishery purposes.

The subcommittee developed an initial list of proposals for providing more storage for instream fishery releases, water quality improvements, wetlands, and refuges. The list was developed from previous studies conducted in the San Joaquin River Basin area. This list included the name of the geographic feature, stream or tributary location, storage capacity, and the agency that previously studied the proposal. Potential alternatives identified included providing new offstream storage, enlarging existing dams, and using wildlife areas for wetlands storage.

A possible new offstream storage site is the proposed Montgomery Reservoir on Dry Creek about 2 miles north of the Merced River near Snelling. The Bureau of Reclamation, which had previously studied this site as part of the proposed East Side Project, has agreed as part of the San Joaquin River Basin Resource Management Initiative to evaluate this offstream storage facility. This reservoir could potentially store up to 250,000 acre-feet.

Reservoir supplies would be released over a two-year period to improve spring and winter flows for the salmon fisheries in the Merced River and lower San Joaquin River system. The Bureau of Reclamation will evaluate the estimated available supply and appraisal costs for this offstream storage option. This evaluation will also require further discussion and coordination with the fisheries subcommittee and Merced Irrigation District.

Wildlife refuges are being discussed as possible storage facilities in the San Joaquin River Basin. The subcommittee received information from the Department of Fish and Game on general water supply needs for refuges, which included the estimated annual water needs, monthly timing of water supplies, and offstream storage operations. This information will be used to evaluate the possibility of using the Grassland Water District as an offstream storage site.

Benefits from the use of water on the wetlands/refuge areas with later release to the San Joaquin River include improved water supplies for the refuges and instream fisheries and better water quality downstream.

The subcommittee also discussed a proposal by Oakdale Irrigation District involving the savings of approximately 50,000 acre-feet of water from the District's system which then could be sold to other users. Potential savings in supply could result from a combination of improved tailwater recoveries, installation of water meters, lining of main canals, better coordination of water deliveries to irrigators, and other water conservation measures and facilities. The sale of water would be allowed only in cases where it could be demonstrated that the potential exists for increased benefits to instream fisheries and water quality. Further consideration will be given to this concept to determine if the proposal would specifically provide solutions to problems identified by SJRMP.

Wildlife Subcommittee

The wildlife subcommittee has been meeting at least monthly since December 1990. Some subcommittee members have also been attending other subcommittee meetings (primarily water quality and flood protection).

The subcommittee is represented by a diverse group, including representatives from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, U. S. Bureau of Reclamation, California Department of Fish and Game, California State Lands Commission, California Waterfowl Association, Grassland Water District, and two wetland management consultants. In addition, a mailing list is kept of other individuals who have expressed interest in the subcommittee but are unable to attend meetings regularly.

After the initial identification of wildlife problems in the San Joaquin River Basin by the Action Team, two separate subcommittees were formed to work on wetland- and riparian-related issues. Once both groups were functioning, it was apparent that the amount of overlap and interaction between the two groups made it more efficient to work as a single group. Consequently, the two subcommittees merged in June 1991.

The initial task of the wildlife subcommittee was to evaluate and further define the seven problems identified in the basin. The wildlife problems are:

- Insufficient quantity and diversity of riparian habitat resulting in loss of species numbers and community diversity.
- Fragmentation of remaining riparian habitat.
- Insufficient quantity and quality of wetland habitat to support wetland-dependent wildlife.
- Land use conversion that is continuing to diminish habitat for sensitive species.
- Wildlife subjected to hazardous or toxic conditions.
- Possible hazardous conditions for aquatic species due to drainage discharges.
- Possible degradation of habitat and disturbed wildlife due to access by the public.

These problems have been defined in detail by the subcommittee. This information is available upon request.

Once the problems were defined, the subcommittee identified general solutions to solve or help alleviate each problem. In many cases solutions for one problem also applied to one or more other problems.

The next tasks for the subcommittee are to further develop the conceptual solutions into actual proposals and identify study needs. These are currently in progress.

Four actions have been initiated by the subcommittee. The first involved working with the flood protection subcommittee to develop a proposal to have the Advisory Council seek an agency to evaluate the feasibility of controlling mainstem San Joaquin River channel aggradation north of the Merced River. (See section on flood protection subcommittee.)

The second action accomplished was drafting a letter from the Advisory Council to the Department of Fish and Game and Central California Irrigation District inquiring about the status of negotiations to change operation of Mendota Pool so that the Mendota Wildlife Management Area can make full use of its water supply. The primary objective of this action is to identify ways that SJRMP can assist in these negotiations.

Next, the subcommittee was peripherally involved with the preparation of a letter from Grassland Water District to the State Water Resources Control Board inquiring into the status of an application filed in 1985 by the District to appropriate water from the San Joaquin River. Further action by the subcommittee on this matter is dependent on the State Board's response.

Lastly, the subcommittee has been working on establishing a demonstration project that would show how solutions to sedimentation and wetland habitat problems can be implemented to complement each other. This idea is currently being discussed by members of each of the other subcommittees to see if there is enough interest to proceed.

Several other solutions and ideas are being worked on, but not enough detail exists to report on them at this time. Some work is also delayed until new aerial photographs of the river system are taken.

The wildlife subcommittee has been requested by the flood protection subcommittee to report on the following three items:

- Allowing floodwaters to be diverted onto lands outside the levee.
- Identifying areas where wildlife habitat (primarily high berms) are being eroded.
- Providing input on removal of bamboo from the Middle and San Joaquin Rivers near Fresno.

The wildlife subcommittee will try to address these issues in the near future and report back to the flood protection subcommittee.

Fisheries Subcommittee

The fisheries subcommittee began meeting in April 1991. Participants in the subcommittee include representatives of federal and State agencies, irrigation districts, and fishing groups. The formation of the fishery subcommittee was delayed because the Department of Fish and Game failed to appoint a subcommittee co-chair. Roger Masuda of Turlock Irrigation District, nominated by the Delta Tributary Agencies Committee, has been acting chairperson since April. The Department of Fish and Game appointed an interim fisheries co-chair effective August 15, 1991.

The fisheries subcommittee has adopted a plan of action to help the Advisory Council and Action Team meet their statutory mandates. Initially the subcommittee will concentrate on salmon; however, other fish species will be considered, depending upon available personnel and funding resources.

The subcommittee is working closely with the San Joaquin salmon planning team, which is directly involved in the State Water Resources Control Board's Bay-Delta process. While the salmon planning team is identifying studies and priority action items, the subcommittee sees its role as taking the next step of examining implementation problems for both studies and action items, specifying time frames, estimating costs and benefits, identifying funding sources, and proposing local, State, and federal actions. The subcommittee has a broader scope than the salmon planning team. The subcommittee covers the South Delta as well as the area upstream of Vernalis. The subcommittee also has greater participation by local water districts.

The subcommittee's plan of action consists of the elements and activities discussed below.

The subcommittee is relying on the San Joaquin salmon planning team's report to the State Water Resources Control Board to define the issues and problems. A third draft of that report is currently under review.

The subcommittee will be a vehicle to help coordinate and implement basin fishery studies. The subcommittee will review and prioritize the studies and make funding recommendations to SJRMP, the Bureau of Reclamation's Initiative Program, and the Corps' San Joaquin mainstem study.

The fisheries and water supply subcommittees are working together to analyze the following three types of water supply measures:

- Water conservation facility water transfers using Oakdale Irrigation District's potential 50,000-acre-foot salvage water project as the case study.

- A hypothetical offstream storage project possibly involving the Merced River.

- A water exchange using the proposed Merced Irrigation District-Bureau of Reclamation exchange to provide water to the Merced National Wildlife Refuge.

The subcommittee has a preliminary goal of developing 300,000 acre-feet of water which would be used conjunctively for fishery purposes and export from the Delta. Consequently, the issues of Delta pumping limits and the environmental impacts and benefits of the additional water will need to be studied.

The subcommittee has begun conducting a preliminary investigation into potential measures to increase salmon production in the upper reaches of the river. Subcommittee members have suggested that a study be made to determine the water needs and the cost of an upper San Joaquin salmon restoration project. The results of the study can be used as baseline information for any salmon improvement measures associated with the operation of Friant Dam.

The subcommittee is interacting with other SJRMP subcommittees on fishery matters and is also funneling into the SJRMP process pertinent information from other ongoing fishery studies.

Subcommittee members agreed to look into the scope and cost of a study to compile the existing data on other fish species in the San Joaquin River Basin.

Recreation Subcommittee

The recreation subcommittee held its first meeting in June 1991. Formation of this subcommittee has been delayed and continues to be hampered by inadequate funding. Specifically, a lack of funding for participation by the Department of Parks and Recreation, which provides a staff member to chair the subcommittee, has slowed subcommittee progress.

The subcommittee is still being formed. The current composition of the subcommittee includes federal and State agencies, recreation groups, and members of the public.

Two specific areas have been the primary focus of the committee to date -- the San Joaquin River between Millerton Lake and Highway 99 and the Stanislaus River between Goodwin Dam and the confluence with the San Joaquin River. The consulting firm of Dangermond & Associates has been hired to develop a plan for the San Joaquin River between Millerton Lake and Highway 99. This work is being carried out in response to AB 3121, Chapter 1025. While Dangermond & Associates are concentrating on the San Joaquin River parkway plan, the recreation subcommittee's efforts have been concentrated on the Stanislaus River. Initial findings on both areas are described below.

Many areas of consensus were found as a result of the San Joaquin River parkway planning team's meetings and workshops with various persons and groups interested in the future of the San Joaquin River corridor. Additional areas of concern for which a consensus has not yet been achieved are being investigated further.

A draft comprehensive parkway plan has been released for review to the San Joaquin River parkway task force.

Established recreation reaches and facilities exist on the Stanislaus River. A compilation of Stanislaus River Park use figures demonstrated a dramatic use increase in the last decade. There are 14 public parks/access sites on the 58-mile reach of river under study. The increased use and the existing infrastructure along the river are conducive to the concept of a Stanislaus River parkway. The first step in evaluating a Stanislaus River parkway will be the development of a bike trial, linking existing parks and public access along the river.

The subcommittee has determined that specific focus groups are needed to examine two distinct study segments: a Stanislaus/Tuolumne River focus group and a Merced/San Joaquin River focus group.

An issue of substantial importance relative to recreation on both study segments is that of inadequate instream flows. The recreation subcommittee will need to work with the water supply committee to find a resolution. Preliminary estimates indicate that a flow of 250 to 500 cubic feet per second is required on the San Joaquin River segment and a flow of approximately 700 to 1,000 cubic feet per second is required on the Stanislaus River study reach.

Another issue of importance being contended with by the subcommittee is that of the incompatibility of recreational activity within wildlife habitat areas. Presently, subcommittee members agree that recreational use should be restricted in sensitive habitat areas or during critical periods. The wildlife subcommittee will work with the recreation subcommittee toward resolution of this issue. It is felt that active management of recreational activities could significantly mitigate adverse impacts to wildlife and its habitat.

The recreation subcommittee will continue to coordinate efforts with other SJRMP subcommittees to resolve issues and effectively plan for the future of the San Joaquin River.